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# Haiti : A Water Crisis

John Karras

*Augustana College, Rock Island Illinois*

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## Background

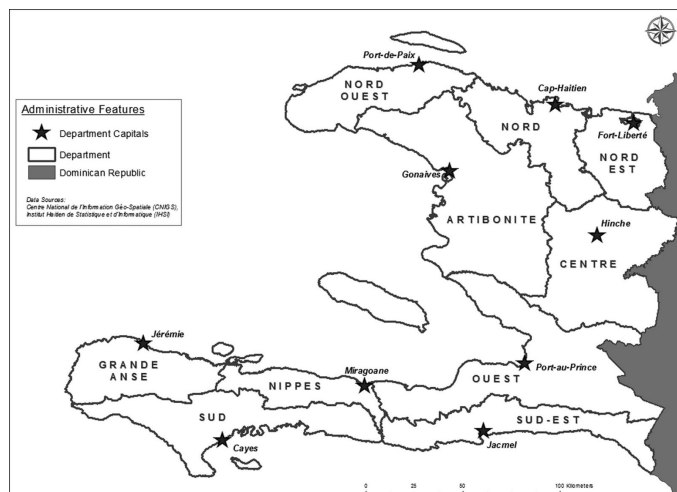
Located in the Caribbean, Haiti occupies the western third of the island of Hispaniola, with the Dominican Republic in the eastern two-thirds. The two countries are not on very friendly terms and never have been. The main reason behind that is their heritage. Haiti is primarily populated by African-Caribbean people with a history of French colonialism. With an area of about 10,714 square miles, Haiti is approximately the size of the state of Maryland. There are 10.85 million people living in Haiti as of 2016.

The government of Haiti is a semi-presidential republic system. This system means that a President serves as Head of State and a Prime Minister serves as Head of Government. The public elect the President to office and the President then appoints the Prime Minister based on the political party in control of the National Assembly.

## Issue

Haiti is the most underdeveloped country in the western hemisphere in terms of water and sanitation infrastructure by a wide margin; only 69% of the population has access to an improved water source and 17% had access to improved sanitation facilities in 2010 (Unicef, 2012). Damage to infrastructure from the magnitude 7.0 January 2010 earthquake, which killed an estimated 230,000 persons and injured 300,000, likely contributed to this decrease, but sanitation coverage in Haiti had already decreased before the earthquake from the 1990 level of 26% to 17% in 2008. The overall coverage figures also mask disparities between urban and rural areas in Haiti, especially for access to improved water sources (Unicef 2012).

In 2010, 85% of the urban population had access to an improved water source, but only 51% of the rural population had access to an improved water source (Sentlinger). Access to improved sanitation is low even in urban areas at 24%, but is considerably worse in rural areas, where only 10% of the population had access to improved sanitation.

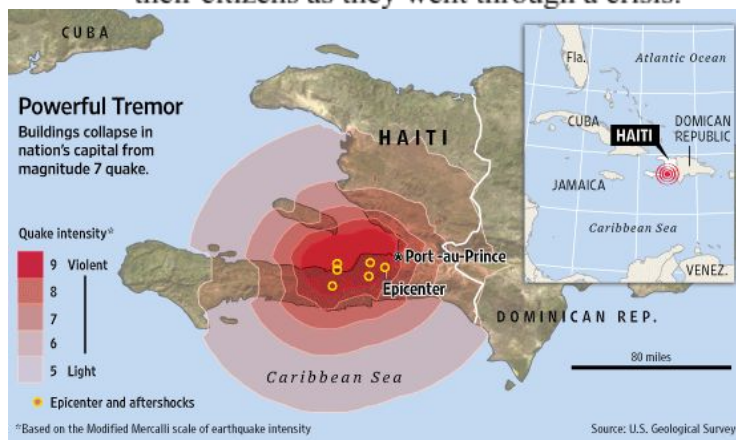


## The 2010 Earthquake

The January 2010 earthquake, striking just months after the formation of the National Directorate for Potable Water and Sanitation (DINEPA), shifted the focus from longer term development to emergency response. The already decrepit water lines of Haiti were damaged by the earthquake along with many other of its infrastructures. Nine months after the earthquake, the broken water lines made perfect conditions for an outbreak of Cholera to start, and it spread quickly throughout the country (Bliss, K., Gelting, R., Handzel, T., Lockhart, G., Patrick, M., 2013). Though treatable, it can be very deadly if left untreated. Today, there are only around 4,900 people still affected by Cholera, which is a 60% decrease from 2016 consensus (Orata, Keim, and Boucher, 2014).

## Solution

Many of Haiti's past solutions have been focused on the short term outlook, not the long term. Recent and past events caused Haiti to shift their long term water goals to short term in order to better help their citizens as they went through a crisis.



Haiti's leaders have always been lackluster, especially one of the most recent ones. As a former pop star, Michel Martelly took the seat after the devastating 2010 earthquake. The actions he made during his reign made it apparent that he had no idea what he was doing, beginning with the failures of his chosen Prime Ministers (Coha, 2009). As big of a failure the President was, there were many before him who were even worse with the power. I believe if the people of Haiti can elect a leader who will focus on the well-being of Haiti rather than any lesser issue, that will be the start of Haiti's growth as a nation, and a start to solve their water crisis.

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